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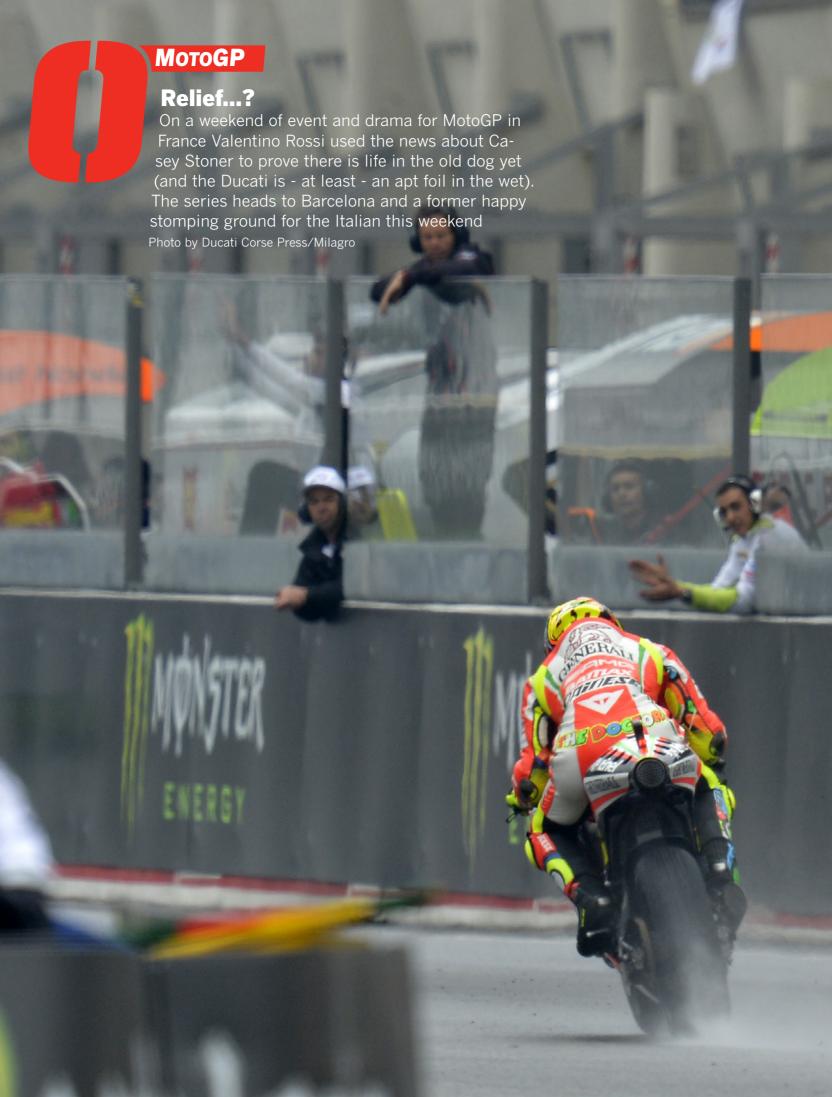




















# THE DUEL: PART TWO

By Steve Matthes www.pulpmx.com, photos by Steve Cox, Hoppenworld.com





Round two of the 2012 Lucas Oil AMA Pro Motocross Championships have come and gone and with it any hope that anyone not named 'James Stewart' or 'Ryan Dungey' will win the 450 Motocross championship.

At Hangtown, we saw JGR Yamaha's Davi Mill-saps get in-between the two guys but at round two in Freestone, Texas, Millsaps was out with a stomach injury and with that, we witnessed a complete freight train out front. A thirty second lead on third place in moto one and an astounding one-minute ten lead in the second

moto indicates that this is indeed a two man race.

But what a two man race it is!

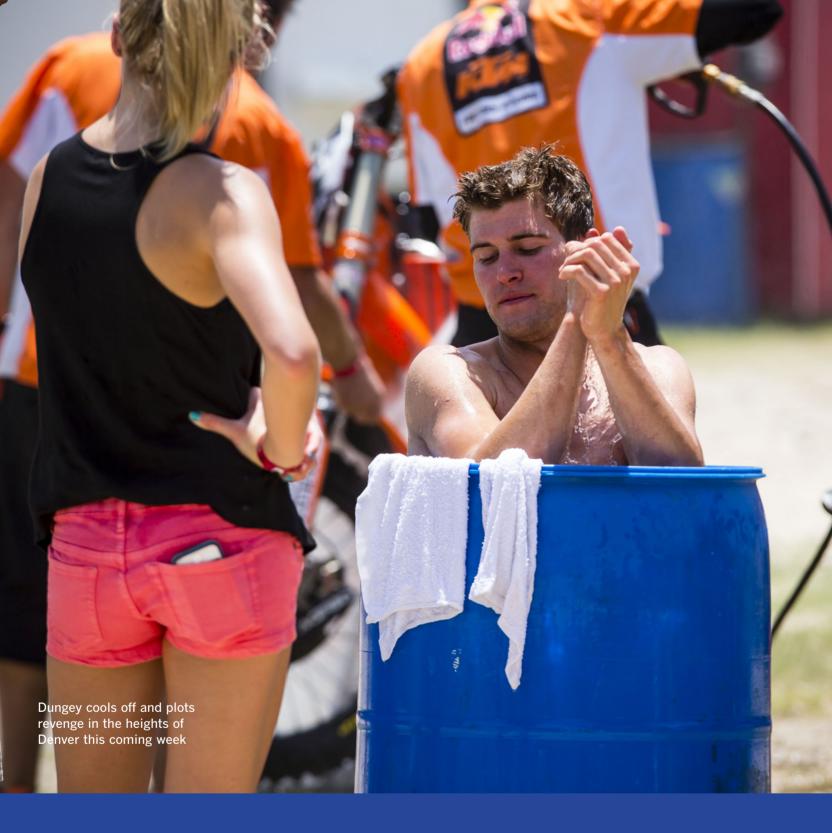
Dungey going 2-2 on the day behind Stewart in what might be the fastest 2-2 ever in the history of motocross. Whatever Dungey tried to do (and he got alongside Stewart more than a few times) he couldn't close the deal on Stewart. On a rough track with mostly one good line, there was nothing that Ryan could do to jam his way by Stewart.



Both racers set their fastest lap times late in both motos. It seems that Stewart has a clock in his head and seems to know when Ryan is going to attempt a push and he just matches him.

It was an incredible display of riding by the still-improving Stewart as he was forced to deal with lappers and knowing that the KTM of Dungey was right there. One slip up anywhere at anytime and he would have been toast.

For Dungey, it had to have been one of the more frustrating races of his career but you'd never know it by listening to him after the race. There's a shell there and it's tough to get inside of it to know what he's really thinking. He's 14 points down after two races and the theory that you can put pressure on Stewart and he'll push it so hard that he goes down might have to be re-thought. I know it's a theory that many of his competitors subscribe to but on this Suzuki, Stewart's never looked more comfortable.



There was great racing at the front of the pack and if you waited a little bit after the top two went by, you saw some more great action behind them.

Monster Kawasaki's Jake Weimer came from around seventh in the first moto to grab his first ever podium in 450 motocross with a great ride. Mike Alessi missed the call to grab his gate in the first moto and therefore was immediately issued the 40th pick which he somehow made work to grab a top ten start

in the first moto. Second time out he rode a composed and cool third to grab the last spot on the box for the second week in a row. Mike's not at the level of the top two guys but after two races, he's got a 9-point lead for third. And keep in mind, Mike's doing this on a bike without any factory parts.

In the 250's the race summary starts and ends with GEICO Honda's Eli Tomac; it's that simple. As great as Monster Energy Pro Circuit's



Blake Baggett was last week it was duplicated by Tomac in going 1-1 on the day. Afterwards, Eli's dad John told me that it was a huge deal for Tomac as the heat and humidity of past races at this track (although the 2012 version was the coolest in recent memory) have taken their toll on Tomac. It was a mental, physical and very 'real' victory for Tomac and he was the class of the field. As amazingly fast as we saw Stewart and Dungey go, it was Tomac who logged the fastest lap of the day in the first

moto as he destroyed the field. No one was close and Tomac's Freestone was the type of day that every motocrosser dreams of.

Baggett had a tough one with mediocre starts but came through the pack to go 2-2 and hold onto the red plate as the standings leader. The day could have been disaster for Blake but he used launching into the sand pit from a single jump to his advantage and again showed us his fitness was on point. They say you win



championships on your bad days and the BB Gun turned what looked to be a bad day to a solid second. Nice ride for Blake. Red Bull KTM's Ken Roczen wasn't that happy after the race to be relegated to the last spot on the rostrum two races in a row but it's consistency that pays off in the end and for right now, hav-

ing never raced on these tracks, a couple of thirds is fine for KTM manager Roger DeCoster. All in all it was a great afternoon of racing at Freestone. The Stewart/Dungey battle is just starting to heat up. Both riders are being very respectful of each other out there on and off the track but things will change. Mark my



words, you can't race wheel to wheel like they are doing and not get some sort of rivalry going. These two are the two best racers at the moment and it's going to be interesting to see who will crack first.

As far as the 250's, well it's still way too early to tell. Colorado this weekend is Tomac's home

state but not his home track, he's so far from the Lakewood venue that he barely ever rode it growing up. Baggett will be great, Tomac's on fire and this weekend is actually one track that Roczen has raced before. Remember the 2010 Motocross of Nations and his incredible race to the front on a 250 versus the 450s?











### **AMA-MX** CLASSIFICATION & CHAMPIONSHIP

AMA 450 OVERALL RESULT				
Riders				
1	James Stewart, USA	Suzuki		
2	Ryan Dungey, USA	KTM		
3	Mike Alessi, USA	Suzuki		
4	Jake Weimer, USA	Kawasaki		
5	Josh Grant, USA	Kawasaki		

AMA 450 STANDINGS (AFTER 2 OF 12 ROUNDS)				
R	iders	Points		
1	James Stewart	100		
2	Ryan Dungey	086		
3	Mike Alessi	070		
4	Jake Weimer	061		
5	Andrew Short	061		

AMA 250 OVERALL RESULT					
Riders					
1	Eli Tomac, USA	Honda			
2	Blake Baggett, USA	Kawasaki			
3	Ken Roczen, GER	KTM			
4	Blake Wharton, USA	Suzuki			
5	Justin Barcia, USA	Honda			

AMA 250 STANDINGS (AFTER 2 OF 12 ROUNDS)				
Ri	iders	Points		
1	Blake Baggett	094		
2	Ken Roczen	080		
3	Eli Tomac	079		
4	Justin Barcia	076		
5	Blake Wharton	055		



### AMA-MX NEWS

## **NEW BEGINNINGS...**

We saw what Red Bull KTM's Ken Roczen could do in Europe with all his race wins and a world title to boot last year. And King Kenny can also ride supercross as we've seen here in America (it's funny how American fans and some media act all surprised that Euros can ride supercross- Roczen, Christophe Pourcel, Marvin Musquin all look like they could be from Corona, California as opposed to Europe) but there were definitely some questions about the AMA motocross series.

How he would do on tracks he's never been to before, with temperatures soaring higher than he'd ever raced in before, with competition that is a little more balls-to-the-wall than he'd experienced before. The learning curve was supposed to be a bit steep when it came to the American motocross series.

But at Hangtown we saw that the Kid would be just fine as he ended the day about a half-lap from winning the first moto and then tipped over in the second race, which cost him a spot.

A 2-3 day for third overall was what he ended up with but Roczen was oh-so close to winning.

We knew the German would be fast and he certainly is but to lead the first moto of the year for 25 minutes? Maybe this kid's nickname should be the Chameleon for his adaptation skills. Roczen's built up a kinship with former teammate Andrew Short (whose own Hangtown race was pretty good) and has now headed out to Short's Texas homestead for a little while to ride and train in the heat. The east coast nationals are hot and humid compared to the California ones and any true racer knows that you can't replicate that by 'motoing' down in California. As well, the shorter flights work for gathering more rest, another important thing.

All in all, Roczen was a bit of a surprise indeed and it seems like him, Justin Barcia, Eli Tomac and the winner Blake Baggett might be on another level from everyone else but it is early.





## **CARBON COPY??**

It was quite a piece of riding by Monster Energy Pro Circuit's Blake Bagget at Hangtown as he poured it on at around the 15-minute mark of the first moto and caught and passed Justin Barcia and then Ken Roczen for the win. The second moto, he didn't bother with the theatrics and drama, he just plain checked out.

Baggett won Hangtown and showed us that his average supercross campaign was history. The fitness needed to push hard after 15-minutes is impressive for sure but we saw a lot of that last year and frankly, as impressive as Baggett's Hangtown was, I'm of the opinion that we already knew this. We knew his game and although I'm not downplaying his ride, I just want to see if we're going to see this all season long.

As we went on last year, Baggett, who was within five points of the lead last season at the halfway mark despite having some DNF's, faded noticeably as the series went on. The AMA outdoors are grueling without many breaks and the effort that Blake expended in the first half clearly wore him down. Of course, in 2011 he had to deal with teammates Dean Wilson and Tyla Rattray who are both now absent and Baggett looks to have an easier time going against a total rookie to USA motocross (Roczen) and a rider that in the past has been inconsistent (Barcia).

So Baggett, like he did last year, threw down the gauntlet at the first race in an impressive showing and for me, he's got to be the favorite for the title but it's early and as I said, we've seen this act before.

# MOUR

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By Steve Matthes

lames Stewart certainly has been the talk of Ithe moto community all over the world with his release from the JGR Yamaha team to the Yoshimura Suzuki team and his surprise commitment to the nationals; the nationals that were happening in only two weeks when the deal was finally announced. The guestions out there could fill an encyclopedia. Bike, fitness, mental strength, team and forgetting about how tough the outdoors were was just some of them. And he answered every single one with his dominance at Hangtown and Freestone. Yes, KTM's Ryan Dungey was right behind him but there never was a doubt in this journalist's mind that Stewart had everything in control. It certainly looks like it's going to be Stewart and the former champ duking it out for the 2012 450 title. And because of that, it's going to be hard to get a points lead for either of the guys. One crash, one bike mechanical and that might be it for the series. It's going to be a tightrope of action for the remaining twenty-two motos.

Stewart and Dungey don't have much in the way of history of racing each other, which also makes things a bit more interesting. At one point back in 2008, Dungey and Stewart were riding buddies when Ryan was on a 250 Suzuki. He lived in Florida and would ride with Stewart at his house.

Around the time that Dungey was moving to 450's, their relationship changed and they were on the 'outs' (compounded by a crash together at a US Open race which caused Stewart to go into the Suzuki truck after the race to see what was up). Not sure if anything personal happened but often, these things crop up in the moto world. There can't be two alpha-dogs riding together at any point. Don't ask why, it just is what it is. Anyways, from there when Ryan moved to the 450's in 2010, Stewart lasted just two races before breaking his wrist and missing the season.

And Dungey went on to win both the supercross and motocross titles in a dominating display. Last season saw Dungey beat Stewart in the supercross series but neither guy had the year they wanted (Dungey was third in the points, Stewart fourth).

There isn't the rivalry with Dungey and Stewart that we might see with a Stewart and Reed or Stewart and Villopoto. Partly because as I said, they haven't gone against each other but part of it is also Dungey's reluctance to get caught up in that kind of stuff. Stewart himself had this to say to Racer X about him and Dungey: "It's just a racing rivalry. We want to beat each other, but it's not a Chad Reed rivalry" which sort of lays the truth out there."

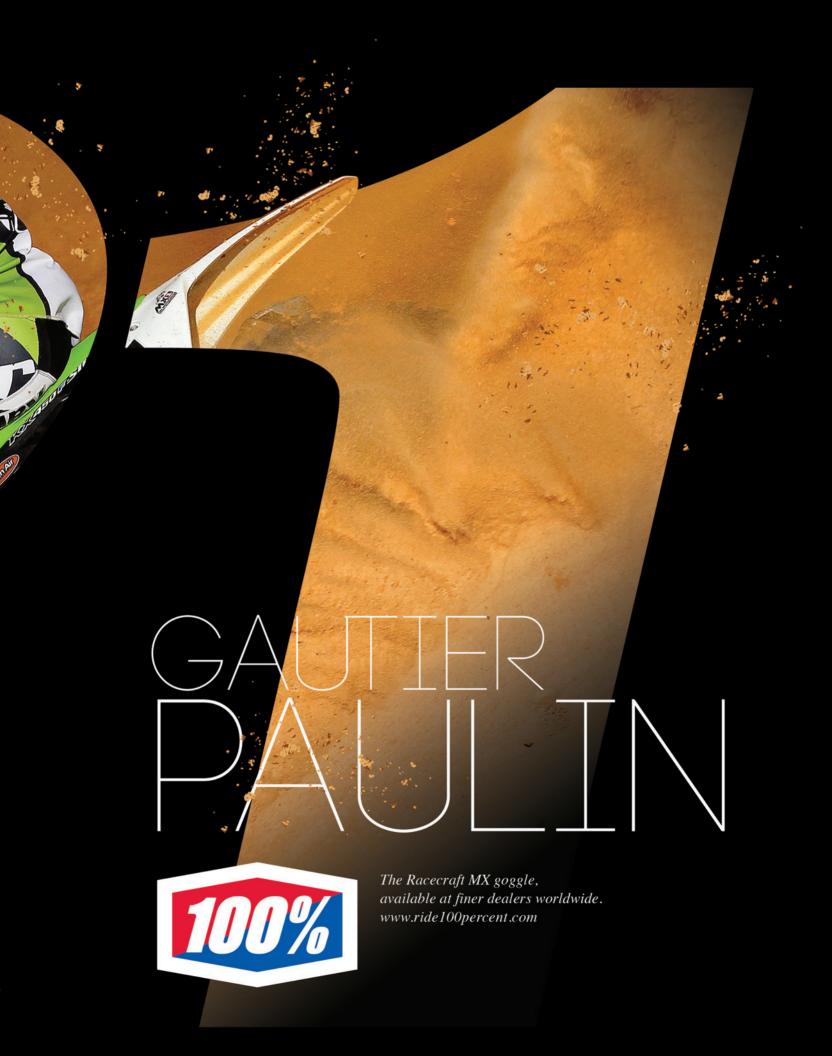
#### **Stewart and Dungey don't** have much of a history racing each other...

The last time Stewart lined up for the outdoors he went 24-0 and although he's perfect through two races now that streak was a long time (2008) and some injuries ago. Ryan Dungey is on his level and once he gets his bike figured out a little better, this battle will truly begin.

And all that prose about this not being a true rivalry will go out the window by the end of July. These two are going to be that close each and every moto with scant points between them. The pressure will rise after each race, the temperatures are going to climb this summer and with it, the calmness of the water is going to disappear. The tussle has just begun for these two riders.















Tommy Searle is one half of the duo fighting for the FIM MX2 Motocross World Championship and he has been restless for most of his young career. The Brit is almost 23 years old and in the midst of his third genuine (and last) attempt at the MX2 crown but as the UK's fastest off-road motorcycle racer he's been spiritually divided between success on a world level and since a first impressive breakthrough season as a fifteen year old in 2006. Brief Grand Prix stardom, rich teenage years, the American dream, the injury nightmare, the return to Europe on prestigious Floride Monster Energy Pro Circuit Kawasaki machinery, the Monster Energy girl relationship; all of it

blossomed from the natural talent and inventiveness towards riding a motocross bike first seen eight years ago.

As Searle pushes towards the immediate goal of being the first British MX World Champion since his current manager/mentor Jamie Dobb in 2001 he also has one eye on the AMA SX and MX series' that he believes did not see the best of his abilities. Just prior to winning the muddy Grand Prix of Brazil and halving the MX2 points deficit to Jeffrey Herlings to just 20 after five rounds, Searle took some time for OTOR and Ray Archer's camera at the beach in Penha...



# Three years in GPs, two in the USA and back to Europe in 2011. How do you feel about where you are in your career?

I feel really good. I have been around quite a while and started GPs when I was fifteen, so seven years being at the highest level...it feels like a long time when I look back! I haven't won a championship yet which is everyone's goal and always will be until I can achieve it before I finish racing.

Maybe, at the time in 2008, my decision to go to America wasn't right. I was speaking to Stefan Everts earlier and he said 'you shouldn't have gone...' but I had a great time and met great people. I have a house there now and I feel like I have done 'that bit' of my life. Business-wise I have always made good decisions and set myself up really well so that's a big thing and you cannot let this aspect go because motocross is also my job and I have to think about the future. At the end of the day I'm really happy racing GPs and I think my coming years will be all about staying here.

### Was the move to America and the AMA not what you thought it would be?

When I went to the US in the first year I had just finished with my girlfriend. It was a difficult part of my life and I was by myself until my friend Ed came over and I hired a trainer who also lived with us and in the end we had a great summer. I wouldn't want to change that period now because it was a great learning experience in my life and one of those that I think everyone goes through. The second year sucked because it was one of the first seasons I had been out with an injury and I was missing races. That was something new for me to deal with. Every rider has it I guess and I was lucky that I had some good years before the injury fuss came around. I feel that I prepare myself well so that I can try to avoid injury but you

always need a bit of luck in this sport. Looking back if I hadn't have been injured in America then I would probably still be there now because I believe I would have set myself up with the speed I had to gain a good contract for the season afterwards. Instead the circumstances brought me back here and it was a blessing in disguise because now I'm back with my family and really enjoying myself.

# The Supercross scene is a big deal. I think anyone would understand you wanting to give it a shot...

I think I'm in a position now where I have two 'bases' and I can maybe pick and choose if I want. When I first went I felt I 'had' to go because that's where people were saying the scene was and that's where I must be. I stayed one year longer in GPs that I apparently should have done and I don't know now whether it would have been better or worse to go earlier. I was young and moved to America on my own. I had a friend but my parents were back here. I was seventeen and brought a house and a truck by myself. I was doing things that maybe many don't until they reach their thirties. When I look at a seventeen year olds now, other riders, and where I was and what I had done by their age it seems a bit crazy. It was a big thing to do but I grew up a lot. Supercross and the whole show is amazing but you spend a long time building yourself up for it and then it doesn't feel like such a major thing. You work for months to be ready to go at Anaheim and by the time you get to the race it feels like something normal. Mentally you are ready for that stadium and you feel that you should be there. I guess you take it for granted a little bit. When I look back now I have the feeling that it was a cool thing to have done. OK, I didn't win but I still had a go.













## The shoulder injury pretty much put you in the shade...

When I got injured it was something small but it stopped me from riding. The problem was - at the time - I believed I still could ride and kept trying to come back. All I did every day was physio, training and then drive to San Diego every day to do strength work with the people I was paying to try and get the shoulder fixed. I spent so much money. All I did was drive here and there, ultrasounds here, tests there, laser treatment: the lot, For three or four months that's all I did and then I'd try and race and something stupid would happen like knocking the shoulder again and I was back to square one. Finally I thought 'I have to sit this one out' and get strong. Maybe I should have done that the first time but each medical test kept saying different stuff. In the end it was a

nerve problem and with that you can only wait.

### Did you enjoy the bachelor life out there?

Yeah, we did have a good time. I was eighteen or nineteen and living in California in a huge house with a pool. I had everything a young kid could dream of. We had fun and perhaps could have had even more but I have good memories and for that I wouldn't change anything.

#### Are you patriotic?

More so now because I enjoy being back home. I have such a good group of people around me. The only shit thing about England is the weather and in May it was raining for so long. I like to go out and have fun, eat in Nandos, go to the cinema and a couple of times, if I can, go out and have a drink with friends. Just hang out and be a normal person.

I don't understand people that feel like they have to live in Belgium. When your whole life is about motocross then I think it can be a little bit too much.

## So how about the move back to Europe? Did you think it was a step back and did it take much thought?

I would go from my house to the offices of the management in Carlsbad and we'd sit around and we'd talk about my options. There was a good deal to come back to Europe and ride for Pro Circuit on this team and I thought about it and at the time the agreement involved doing the GPs and also Supercross. I went for it and got ready for that schedule. It felt like quite a big decision. Was I really just going to drop everything I had there to come back home? I spoke a lot with Jamie [Dobb] at that time and the most obvious choice was to come back, find an apartment in Derby, train again with

Kirk [Gibbons] and re-find those old tracks. The contract was to race supercross then do the world championship. I started the old routine and got myself in good shape in October and November but then I broke my foot and that meant I could only start riding again three weeks before the first supercross. It got to a fortnight before the first round and I thought 'I either do this half-arsed or I knock it on the head and get ready for the GPs' so that's the direction we decided to take. I didn't want to take the risk of getting hurt doing a supercross campaign when I wasn't fully prepared and then messing up the whole season.

If I had another bad year then my career would have gone down. I think you can have one bad season but two in a row sees your stock and value drop. Like in any motorsport you need a good ride to get good results. I'm happy with where I am.





## Is there much of bond with Mitch Payton and the U.S Pro Circuit set-up?

I have a great relationship with him and when I'm there in the winter he helps a lot with everything and I see him a couple of times a week. Even now, here in Europe, we speak frequently. I can't thank him enough for what he has done for me and then also with the team here because it is one operation. Mitch is just nice guy in general. I liked his Superbowl party! He's good to hang out with.

#### People say you fly on a 450...

I'm really looking forward to racing it. I did the Nations last year and I feel like I'm a good 450 rider and I reckon I can be going for wins straight away.

#### MX1 is pretty stacked though...

Yeah it's stacked but if you look at Paulin and Frossard they have gone up and made an impression right away. I think I am a good enough rider to do that. When I raced those

guys on the 250s they never really beat me. We were always together. At the Nations I proved I can go fast on a 450.

## Of all the characters in the Grand Prix paddock how do you see yourself? Does being 'top Brit' mean anything?

I never liked that idea of being top Brit and it was never a big deal for me. When I first came into the world championship you had people like Mackenzie, Nunn and Sword and those guys always loved to be top Brit but it wasn't a priority for me. I have some great fans and I love doing well for myself and for them but like anyone in this sport our goals are our own. This ain't a team sport. What you put in, you get out. The team is behind you and puts the bike into that waiting zone but you are the one that takes it to the gate. Jeffrey [Herlings] is a young Dutch kid and he is who he is. I wouldn't hang out with him during the week but I don't really hang out with any riders. We are all different people.

## THE WAN WHO COULD SAVE



South African Chris Leatt is the doctor and driving force behind the Leatt brace – a product that revolutionized an important aspect of safety for off-road riding. The Leatt company now has the road and road-racing markets in their sights with the STX model. Three years separated Leatt's inspiration for

the neck brace and the first unit sold in South Africa in 2004. Four years later and the company were able to establish the Leatt Lab in Cape Town and continue their expensive, exhaustive but vital R&D work. Here Dr Leatt himself checks-in for a few questions and to talk about the aim to get going on the road...





### It seems you have invested, researched, innovated, made an impact and then entered a phase of having to battle the imitators. What is Leatt's direction now?

I believe we are a prudently fast-growing, safety product innovation company. We launched our flagship product in a large-scale commercial way in 2007 in the USA and have grown from strength to strength. Obviously new and fast growing companies have many challenges, including the unauthorized use of our IP, however I believe we are known as the Gold Standard in neck protection and have taken action against numerous infringers to date. We have spent the last few years perfecting our growing product range including the street version the STX and soon to be launched STX RR race brace.

### How many resources and how much of a priority has the STX road racing brace carried within the company?

I am a road racer, therefore the street and race market is personally close to my heart. Last year I competed in the regional SA BOTTS championship, which I won! I mention this to show that we are close to our market and hopefully understand what riders need and we can provide this. James Egan recently appeared on the podium twice this year in the BSB series, wearing the STX RR and announced our introduction into this category.

Has the gestation of the brace been a long and complicated process? Has it been harder to perfect and develop compared to off-road? It has taken more than five years of research, testing, proof of concept and development to get the brace into the market. I think it is important to understand that this was initially not a commercial motivation but rather solving the problem of catastrophic neck injury prevention of mitigation.

# Going on-road was a natural development. What is your personal view on the project and isn't there a lot more 'prejudice' to fight with road riders usually more particular about their gear...?

We faced initial negative sentiment in the offroad market from many people too, however, as soon as they were fitted appropriately and understood the science basis of the product, this sentiment changed. I believe the same will be true of the street and road race market. At Leatt, we thrive on challenges!

## What about off-road? Are there any new directions to take with the product? Or will Leatt focus on other safety technology?

You may have noticed that we dropped the 'Brace' component of our product name, we are know as LEATT® and no longer Leatt-Brace®, this signals our product diversification from that of purely researched neck protection to a much wider range of researched protection products and apparel. As you can see from our web site, we are now offering a much broader range of products with a large number of products still in development.

# How have Leatt been able to tackle the economic crisis? Have there been significant shifts in the company's goals and strategies because of market behaviour?

I believe we chose to consolidate, build good systems, hire key people and quietly get on with new product development whilst the whole industry and economy was facing huge pressures. We are a stable and focused company that will act prudently whilst remaining truly innovative. We have great distribution but will always work hard with our distribution to find greater efficiencies.

## Does it annoy or frustrate you that people still point a finger at the purposes and practical use of the brace when it has been scientifically proven?

It is very easy to make flippant statements and 'go-viral' with social media these days, however, I don't believe our customers are that naive and will satisfy themselves as to our scientific merits once they visit the testing page on our web site. The proof is that we are the Gold Standard in neck protection and the vast majority of customers looking for neck protection choose our products. Leatt has been in long term discussions with almost all governing bodies for many years, to offer our products for homologation and constantly encourage widespread academic scrutiny of our design philosophy and test results.





































## MX NEWS

# 2013 GP CALENDAR TO HIT EIGHTEEN ROUNDS?

A pparently there are still another three months ahead before we see anything like a provisional calendar for the 2013 FIM Motocross World Championship but some revealing signs for what lies in store emerged in Brazil last week.

There were already a few rumours floating around about the schedule lengthening to seventeen or eighteen rounds after the initial elongation of the series to sixteen events this year. The extra dates apparently consist of more overseas meetings with six races complimenting a set of twelve within Europe. The gossip was partially substantiated by a Youthstream and FIM press conference on Saturday afternoon at Beto Carrero in which the promoters – along with local masterminds Romagnoli Promotions and Events and CBM – said a second Brazilian Grand Prix is being considered for next year.

At the same event Mr Kraitos Wongsawan CEO of Thai company FMSCT was not shy in revealing that the very first Thai Grand Prix to be held at Pattaya, about 100km south of Bangkok and on the seafront, will be the season opener on March 16/17.

This represents a start to the racing campaign some three weeks earlier compared to the current competition and could mean a subsequent transcontinental hop to South America for a truly cosmopolitan launch to 2013.

With Thailand, Russia, two trips to Brazil (Beto Carrero will host one if not both Brazilian dates) and another four years agreed with Mexico that leave still one spot still to fill if the conjecture is to be proved correct and the only name floating around was Panama.

A question mark hangs over Mexico with local and national elections occurring in July 2012 and if support for the event can still be found for 2013 then the original plan for a construction of a new circuit in Guadalajara will assist Sebastien Tortelli's vision for the Mexican spectacle.

If the Nico Espana layout remains the only option then at least the organisers will be able to use this month's fourth round of the championship as an important learning step, and there were already some positive points to be taken from the inaugural attempt by the Mexicans.





## THAILAND CHECKS OUT BRAZIL

eading up the first Thai Grand Prix in 2013, FMSCT CEO Kraitos Wongsawan was an eager visitor to the recent Grand Prix of Brazil and could not have picked a better location as a benchmark for the level of presentation to which the FIM Motocross World Championship now aspires.

Youthstream Vice President Luigi Zompetti described Beto Carrero as the "best venue I have seen in my life" while FIM Vice President, Portugal's Jorge Viegas, commented that the setting of the circuit next to a major theme park created "Disneycross". "There is huge potential in Brazil and it is wonderful we can still bring motocross to such a high level," he stated. "As the FIM have said, we need to go where the markets are booming, and motocross is on the right track. We are saying that standards have to be kept high and those who cannot adapt are out of the game. Here, in Brazil, this is how it should be."

The image of Beto Carrero and the bold words of the powers-that-be were a forthright step in a direction after the poor picture (that was

perhaps overly harsh) conveyed of the Mexican round one week earlier. Wongsawan was immensely enthusiastic and was permitted a glimpse of the job ahead with the infrastructure set-up at Beto Carrero and highlighted that his upcoming event was a chance to springboard some Thai racing talent to world championship prominence.

Even Viegas commented that, from his experience, the Thai athletes were among some of the fastest in Asia and alluded to their superiority even over Japanese competitors. Wongsawan has already made a vital step in his preparation by actually coming to see another Grand Prix, something that the Mexican organisers allegedly neglected to do beyond their trip and announcement of their ambitions at Glen Helen last year.

The careful study of other GPs is an exercise in which the Russians have also been active. A representative from the Semigorje crew has been present in Holland, Bulgaria and Italy and although the circuit will suffer a little through its remoteness (and language barrier) the new-

# ADMER

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## WAY AROUND THE WORLD...

By Adam Wheeler

The FIM Motocross World Championship wants to go global and it is hard to see much wrong with this approach.

Youthstream's attempts to ask the manufacturers (mainly Japanese) at the source to invest in their racing - and subsequently motocross as a sport - was a longshot; especially with the European teams essentially backed by European branches and subsidiaries of the companies. In recent years the series carried a distinctly European flavour with the odd trip abroad; European show, European budget.

The FIM World Championship now appears to have a little more scope, and with markets in Asia, South America and Russia covered (the U.S. still remains a sizable hole as does Australasia and Africa) the need to consider the series on a bigger scale has increased.

If the 2013 calendar does enlarge beyond sixteen rounds and means more use of freight for the teams then the cash to get the show on a plane will have to be found somewhere. A nonfactory team with two riders is looking at a cost of around 17-18,000 euros in shipping and travel for a double stint like Mexico and Brazil. That same team could use up to just 50,000 euros per season for a race truck doubling as accommodation for the majority of the European rounds. So the flyaways represent a hefty hike.

Given the current status quo, the scenario of Youthstream packing and shipping the teams' wares according to a kilo allowance as Dorna do for the competitors in MotoGP seems a distant dream. But the situation could evolve for the better if there was a travel regulation, say one bike per rider (extra material through parts supply could be provided by the distributor of the country visited), one box and a limit on weight. Youthstream President Giuseppe Luongo is attempting to play the long-term game in terms

of steering the sport into some greener climes and inflating motocross to a degree that it can't be ignored by more global entities (i.e. the manufacturers) by going to further territories but he knows this adds more burden. Not only to the riders and crews themselves but also the logistical cost of the series for Youthstream and increased risk of wavering quality control (as anyone who saw the TV coverage from Mexico might attest).

# For the GPs to head overseas maybe there should be a one bike, one box and weight rule...

As mentioned in a previous issue Youthstream are apparently looking at the collaboration of parties (organiser, YS and teams) to help establish a travel fund and Luongo stated that if he had the top fifteen riders in each class on the gate in a non-European event then he'll be happy. "The most important part of our sport is the riders," the Italian said to us at a recent social event and the man is not the deluded plunderer that many of his critics make him out to be; he is well aware how much it costs to get the series on the road and get the GP stars to a far-flung field in Thailand. Like every businessman he'll stretch the boundaries, but if the sport needs to snap itself out of a rut then a financial band-aid has to come from somewhere.

This might put more pressure on the overseas Grand Prix organisers but if a country like Brazil can entertain the notion of two events in a year then can the added expenditure to ensure a healthy line-up of talent in the gate be too much of a ask...?





PRIX DE FRANCE



# LORENZO FIRES BACK

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by www.yamahamotogp.com, Ducati Corse Press, Milagro, Honda Pro Images, Andrew Northcott, Chailan/Piole





















### MOTOGP NEWS

# CAL BRAKING OUT

Cal Crutchlow's performances so far this season have set tongues wagging across the MotoGP paddock. Lying in fourth place after four rounds the Coventry-born rider has battled for podium finishes and gone toe-to-toe with his team-mate Andrea Dovizioso – who himself finished third in last year's standings.

The British rider does have one gripe however, and that's an issue with his brakes. Although the Tech3 team do not provide the latest offerings from Brembo,

Dovizioso has dug deep into his pocket to come up with the estimated \$60,000 to equip his own bike with the Italian firm's most recently developed carbon fibre discs and calipers. These are the same he used at Repsol Honda last year and reportedly prevent some of the overheating problems Crutchlow has been experiencing.

Fans of Crutchlow were so moved by this that a fund was even set up to supply the Briton with the latest kit. However they may want to take note of his latest exchange on Twitter with world champion Casey Stoner before forking out the cash:

@Official\_CS27: @calcrutchlow hey mate don't go thinking everything new is better, I still use the old brakes as I didn't like the new ones. No advantages

@calcrutchlow: @Official\_CS27 Hey mate. No I just want them as dovi has them ..., hahahaha. I have prob with mine overheating though ...

@Official\_CS27: @calcrutchlow I had more problems with the new ones, more touchy and no more power in the long run. Don't let what Dovi has get in your way.





# RUMOUR MILL CLICKS INTO GEAR

It was inevitable after such a high-profile announcement as Stoner's, and with all the major players' contracts up at the end of the season, but suffice to say that the rider market has been blown wide open considering the amount of rumours already flying about in Le Mans.

The focus was immediately on who would step into Stoner's shoes at Honda, and already there are a number of candidates. Jorge Lorenzo would seem to be the prize asset in the Australian's absence and will undoubtedly receive some kind of offer from HRC, the question would be if Yamaha can counter that offer not only monetarily but in terms of performance ambition too – something which Lorenzo is (likely) equally as keen on assuring.

HRC however are keeping their options open, with vice-president Shuhei Nakamoto admit-

ting that he wouldn't want an all-Spanish line-up and even Valentino Rossi would be in the reckoning. That means that Dani Pedrosa's future with the factory would also come under scrutiny, with Marc Marquez a possibility if the 'rookie-rule', which prevents MotoGP debutants from slotting into factory teams, were to be scrapped.

Stefan Bradl could be one to benefit from the shake-up, with backing from his sponsors Red Bull meaning he could be in line for a promotion if he continues to impress, while Cal Crutchlow is another name being mentioned after his superb start to 2012.

One thing is clear, this silly season is set to be a long drawn out affair and rider managers are going to be working flat out to get their athletes the best deal possible.

# 

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# RESPECT WHERE IT'S DUE...

By Gavin Emmett

Casey's announcement caught everyone napping, you could tell by the stunned silence that hung in the Le Mans press conference room as he made the statement.

It took a couple of seconds for the news to sink in, and then the rounds of applause actually had to be started by his wife Adriana. Everyone, including the riders alongside him were shellshocked at the sudden announcement, even if many of us suspected it was due in the next couple of years.

Agree or not with some of the more controversial things he said during his statement, the rapturous ovation he received showed that although he may think otherwise, the media have real respect for Stoner as a racer. The respect may be grudging in some quarters, but even the harshest critic cannot doubt his astounding talent astride the fastest race-bikes in the world. In fact, that probably echoes what a lot of fans think too.

You can like or loathe his personality, but that fact becomes irrelevant when every sinew of body and bike is being stretched to its limit once the lights go out.

It will be sad to not see that genius on track week in, week out.

You have to think that he has taken some of the media's reporting of his career very personally, and that this has played a big part in his decision. He has at times felt victimised, but that is part and parcel of sport at the highest level.

Similarly the birth of his daughter can only have influenced his choice - however much he tried to play that down I think that if he and his wife had not had a child this year, the decision may have been delayed.

## He may think overwise but the media have real respect for Stoner as a racer...

He would deny that though, and one thing you can never accuse Stoner of is not being honest and true to his feelings – however misguided or incorrect you may feel his opinions are.

Look back at his quotes through the years, what some will see as whinging, he would say is just telling things straight. Where some see sour grapes, he would say that he is just willing to speak out loud what others are scared to admit. Where some would say moaning, others, like myself, would see a perfectionist in action, striving to be the best one hundred per cent of the time. And ultimately, you can't ask more from an athlete, and you have to thank him for those efforts and wish him all the best for the future.













Depto the Gran Premi de Catalunya this weekend Stoner has made **165 Grand Prix appearances** in eleven full seasons of competition. He made his debut at Donington Park for the British Grand Prix in 2001, qualifying 18th and finishing 17th on – appropriately - a 125cc Honda. He scored his first points (12th place) on his second and last appearance that year as a wild-card in Australia. It would be the beginning of a fine run of form at Phillip Island.

Stoner started his Grand Prix career at the age of 15. His first full season in 2002 was completed in the 250cc category where his best result was a 5th position in Brno, Czech Republic riding the LCR Aprilia. His **first podium** came in Germany the following year for what was the first of two seasons (2003 and 2004) back in the 125s. The **first win** arrived at Valencia the same term (2003) with the 125cc Aprilia.

e moved up to the 250s again in 2005 and won the second and third rounds in Portugal and China. '05 was his last in the lower classes. He shifted into **MotoGP at the age of 20 in 2006** and his achievement of taking pole on his second race and a podium finish on his third has been well documented.

The Aussie is a general fan of **motorsports**, is a fantastically fast kart racer and shows a deft hand at off-road motorcycling to-boot, specifically dirt-track and motocross. The Stoner family left Australia for the UK and to follow the youngster's career just after his 14th birthday. His **big break** came after being spotted by talent scout Alberto Puig in Spain and he finished second in the 2001 Spanish and British 125cc national championship; he made his Grand Prix debut the same year and didn't look back.

To-date Stoner has managed **35 wins in MotoGP**, 5 were taken on a 250 (all Aprilia) and 2 on a 125 (one with Aprilia another with KTM). 2012 is his seventh season in the premier class. In that time and through **104 appearances so far Stoner has 63 podium results**; a very healthy percentage on three different motorcycles and two different brands. In total he has ridden for four manufacturers in his GP career.

e became the first reigning champion in MotoGP who is also a **father** since Wayne Rainey in 1993. His daughter, Alessandra, was born on 16th February.

Worth noting that in 2012, the year **KTM** return to the Grand Prix paddock with their Moto3 effort, Casey gave the Austrians the **first GP victory** ever in Malaysia eight years earlier.

Stoner rode for **Ducati between 2007 and 2010** winning 23 races and the '07 championship. The same year he claimed the number one plate – the achievement of his personal ambition – he owned ten races, the same amount he managed with the Repsol Honda in 2011. In fact he managed only two more podium finishes last year compared to that first triumphant campaign. In 2007 he did score more points though: 367 compared to 350.

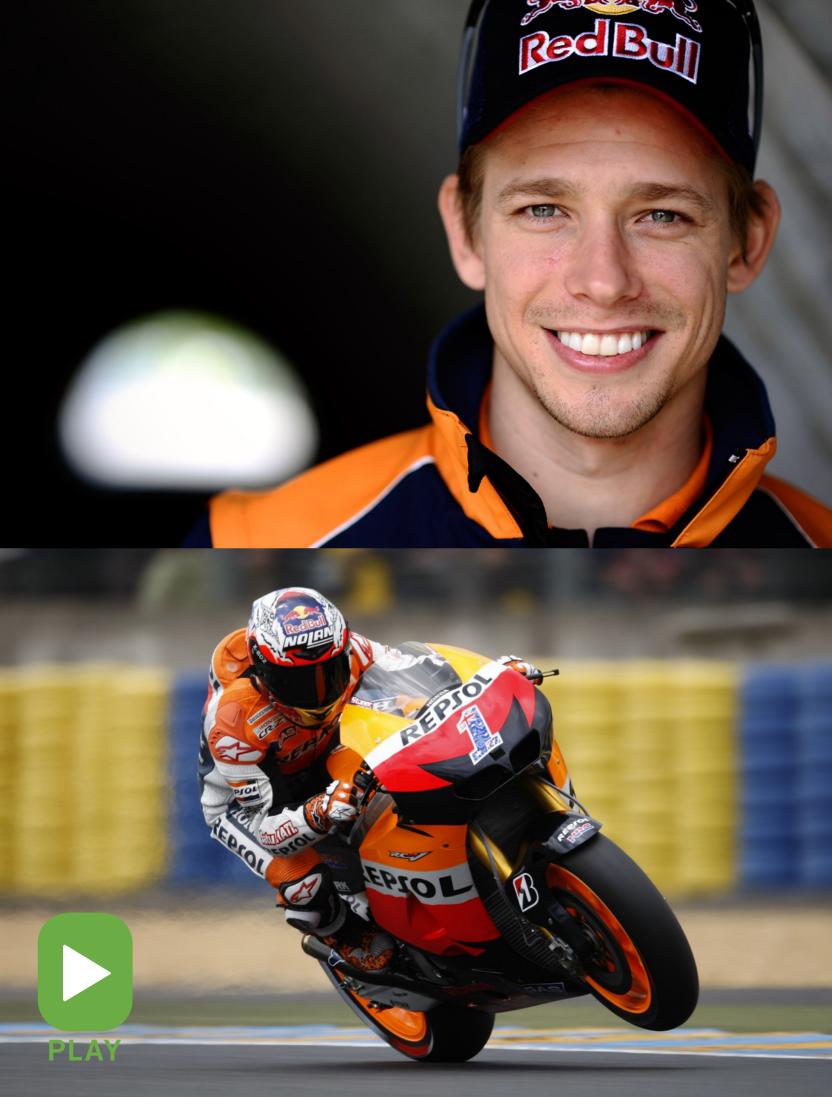
From eleven seasons of Grand Prix racing Stoner has appeared on the podium at least once in ten of those years. The same can be said of his pole position record. His most prolific term for capturing the first slot on the front row is unsurprisingly 2011 with 12 poles.

Commonly known this...with victory in Portugal recently Stoner has now won at all eighteen circuits on the current MotoGP schedule. He also has claimed the top step at former venues like Donington Park, Shanghai and Istanbul. He is joint-eighth in the all-time GP winner's list.

Ging to Catalunya he has nineteen podium finishes in a row. Stoner needs just four more to equal Valentino Rossi's record of 23. He has stood on the box 20 times for Honda since joining them for 2011.

e has won the Malaysian Grand Prix four times in three different classes but is undisputed top dog on home turf. He has won the last five MotoGP races at Phillip Island.

Casey will be the third active and uninjured outgoing world champion to retire from the premier class while holding the number one plate (the others were John Surtees in 1960 and Gary Hocking in 1962). He might not be the first former champion to make a return (Freddie Spencer)...





### Matt says...

Like most people I was absolutely astounded when Casey made his announcement in France (you only have to read my column in the previous week's OTOR to see why!).

Of course I knew that he had been talking about retirement but he has been talking about it for as long as I can remember - I honestly didn't expect him to actually do it so soon. The timing of the announcement and the way it was done was a huge surprise and I bet Red Bull weren't too happy with the Monster branding all over the backdrop but Casey does things his own way, he always has done. Likewise his comments about the state of the sport were perhaps ill advised.

Everybody has their opinion and he is perfectly entitled to his but my own feeling is that criticising the sport was unnecessary and detracted from the genuine, hugely admiral reasoning behind his decision. To walk away from a sport when you are at the top must be hard for any athlete and it says a lot about his humility that he does not crave the constant success and adulation that others do to their own long-term detriment.

He has made a decision in the best interests of his young family and you have to admire and respect that. Not for the first time his courage and conviction has set him apart from the rest.

Matthew Roberts presents the BBC's live coverage of MotoGP and has been working in the paddock since 2000





Gavin Emmett is the face of the official podcast 'After the Flag' and is the international voice of MotoGP. He has worked in the sport since 2001

### Gav says...

However shocked you may be about Casey Stoner's decision, most people were aware that it was in the pipeline. He has been on the road from his home in Australia for most of the last 13 years, and that would take its toll on anybody, never mind a real family-orientated person like Stoner. He has been a fierce critic of new regulations and the media, and has clearly become disillusioned with this lifestyle.

It is obviously a huge shame to lose him, but more than anything for me because I feel that the issues have become muddled for him and rather too personal. Everyone, including the decision-makers, admits that the directions the sport has taken are not ideal, but it is not an ideal world any more. Money is thin on the ground, and something had to be done.

Similarly, the media have and always will want a story, but it is not a personal issue and this is something that I think he will realise once out of the sport and taking a look at the bigger picture. Mick Doohan is a different man now retired.

The sport will miss him, but like the retirements of big names in the past such as Doohan, it survives. It continues to develop, albeit in another direction and with a new spin. There will be other youngsters coming through, all who will strive to be as special as Stoner has been.







'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focus-sed on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at www.ontrackoffroad.com every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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